

*USS Nimitz and  
USS Independence  
off Japan.*



U.S. Navy (Chris Ware)

# Shaping Our Future in the Asia-Pacific

By JOSEPH W. PRUEHER

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Admiral Joseph W. Prueher, USN, is commander in chief, Pacific Command, and formerly served as vice chief of naval operations.

**T**oday, U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) forces are ready and work closely with our allies to prevent conflict in the Asia-Pacific region. This has not always been the case. America largely withdrew its military presence following the defeat of Japan in 1945. Then on July 5, 1950, a hastily deployed Sergeant First Class Loren Chambers, a World War II combat veteran with five Purple Hearts, became engaged in a new Asian conflict. His unit had only rifles and light artillery to fire at the

Inmun Gun's T-34 tanks when it was overrun near Osan in South Korea. Chambers and the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 21<sup>st</sup> Infantry, put Kim Il Sung on notice that the United States would fight aggression in Asia; but our unreadiness cost the lives of thousands of Americans and millions of Koreans.

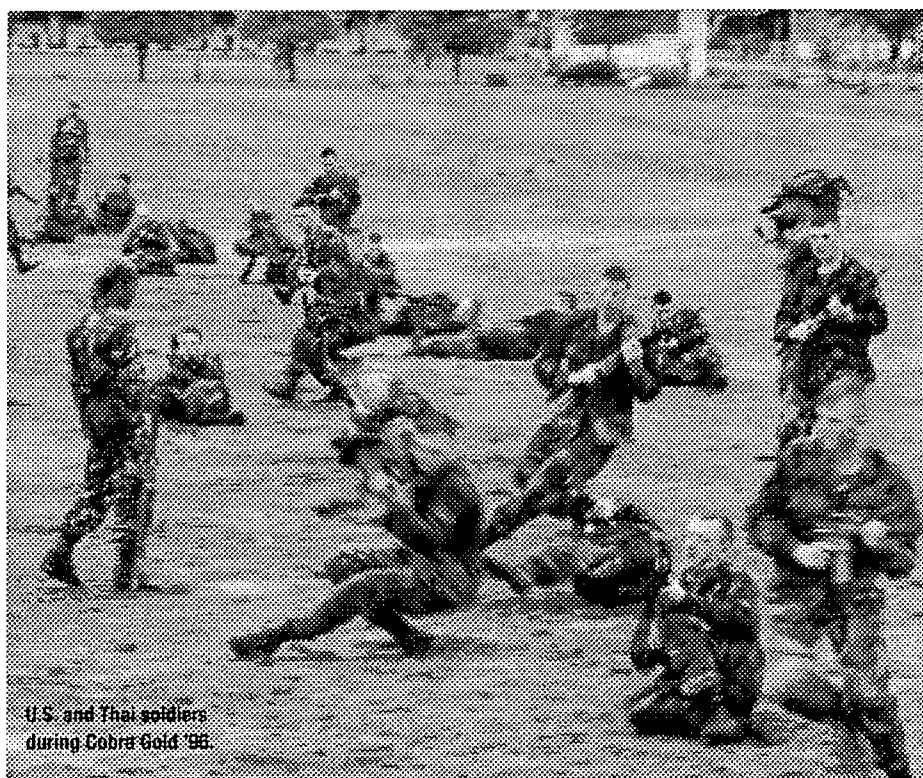
Containing aggressors who doubted our commitment has exacted a dreadful price in Asia. Since 1950 more members of the U.S. military

have died in this region than in the rest of the world combined. Yet the steadfastness of America and its allies has succeeded in laying the foundation for the greatest economic growth in history. The sharp contrast between prosperous democracy in South Korea and impoverished repression in the North illustrates the value of our investment.

PACOM is ready and engaged for the long haul, advancing U.S. interests in Asia-Pacific security and stability into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is pursuing positive security relations with all nations to prevent conflict and respond to crises. The forward presence of our forces will remain essential to regional security, stability, and opportunities for prosperity far into the future. Improvements in joint warfighting will also be necessary to sustain our military successes into the future.

The PACOM area of responsibility (AOR) stretches from California to India and the eastern shore of Africa, encompassing 43 nations. The region includes over half the world's surface, half its population, and—when combined with the United States—half its economy.

Economic, political, and military interests converge in the region. Economically, America and the other Asia-Pacific nations have become interdependent over the last generation. The region accounted for only 4 percent of world economic output in 1960. By 1995 it exceeded 34 percent. By 2020 it is estimated the region will account for 50 percent of the world's economic output. American consumers benefit from trade in the region. Imports to the United States amounted to more than \$312 billion in 1996. Exports to the region were over \$200 billion and accounted for 3 million U.S. manufacturing jobs. This represents 36 percent of our two-way merchandise trade, matching that with Canada and Latin America combined and almost double that with the countries of the European Union. In addition, the United States exports another \$81 billion in services to the region and has invested over \$140 billion. Instability in Asia is thus a threat to our economy.



U.S. and Thai soldiers during Cobra Gold '96.

DOD (Christopher G. Hesse)

Though the current financial crisis is causing turmoil with Asian currencies and stock markets, the affected economies will likely recover to sustainable growth rates as long as regional stability and the market system endure. America's economic future is linked to continuing commercial access and freedom of navigation throughout the region.

Our cultural and political interests are also increasingly tied to Asia. According to the 1990 census, Asian-Americans are the fastest growing segment within the American middle class and are no longer confined largely to the west coast but are numerous in New Jersey, Texas, Georgia, and elsewhere. By 2020 the U.S. population is likely to include over 20 million Asian-Americans.

Internationally, successful management of challenges such as pollution and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction depends on cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region, which includes over a fifth of U.N. membership. Its 3 billion people present the world's largest opportunity for advancing democracy, and democra-

cies are more likely to work together and less likely to fight.

Militarily, the major enduring U.S. regional interest is to ensure that no hegemon or hostile coalition arises in the Asia-Pacific. Such a challenge could provoke a costly hot war or a protracted cold war. The United States shares sufficient security interests in the region that five of our seven mutual defense treaties bind us to allies there and sustain our presence—with Japan, Republic of Korea, Republic of the Philippines, Australia, and Thailand.

**JFQ**

## JOSEPH W. PRUEHER

**JFQ** *What do you see as the major concerns for security in the Asia-Pacific?*

**PRUEHER** There are four. The most immediate threat is the situation on the Korean peninsula. Only a thin demilitarized zone separates North Korea's million-man military from the combined forces of the United States and South Korea. At some point this standoff will end. Our readiness ensures peace until that occurs.

Then there is potential instability resulting from the Asian financial crisis. We are working closely with our allies and friends in the region to alleviate the pressure. The size, shape, and timing of U.S. military contacts have been adjusted to maintain our engagement with them. Next is the China-Taiwan dispute. Although this is potentially the most contentious issue between the United States and China, we are building mutual understanding to resolve differences.

The third challenge is the peaceful resolution of territorial disputes over small island groups in the South China Sea which sit astride shipping lanes linking the Persian Gulf and Southeast and East Asia. They contain exploitable deposits of both oil and natural gas. Eight nations—including China, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Vietnam—assert sovereignty over various island groups in the South China Sea. The United States takes no position on the legal merits of these competing claims but encourages the claimants to exercise restraint and avoid destabilizing actions.

**JFQ** *How is U.S. involvement important to the stability of the Asia-Pacific region?*

**PRUEHER** The region is generally at peace but is not free from the possibility of major conflict. As Henry Kissinger recently noted, "Wars, while not likely, are not inconceivable. . . . Peace will require deliberate efforts." There is no status quo to which every regional power adheres. There is no integrating organization such as the European Union or NATO to reconcile conflicting goals.

While expanding commercial ties generally tend to promote peace, they can also produce new pressures. Continued growth will increase tension over access to scarce resources such as oil. Conversely, if economic growth rates continue to decline, dashed expectations among expanding populations could trigger instability.

America is unusually well positioned among Asia-Pacific military powers. Our economic, diplomatic, and military capabilities can help maintain stability and prevent major conflict. Thus the United States is particularly suited to join with other nations as a partner to broker regional security, cushion tensions, and defuse crises.

**JFQ** *What are America's strategic alternatives in the region?*

**PRUEHER** For the immediate future our best choice is what Joseph Nye, the former Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, called "deep engagement"—active presence and partnership with other states there. By aiding the security of others we further our interests.

While the notion of engaging only in great emergencies and then with commanding force is seductive, in practice it could be disastrous. As in 1950, our resolve and capability would likely be doubted. Some nations could be pressured to pursue far more independent policies and to maintain much higher levels of military capability. Absent a forward basing structure, crises could provoke conflict faster than we could mobilize and overcome the vast distances of the Pacific.

A cooperative security system might eventually reduce the requirements for U.S. military presence. But until such a system includes every regional power the need for American forward deployed forces will persist, even if stable peace is established on the Korean peninsula. We can expect such a system to emerge gradually, matching the rates at which Asia-Pacific states advance trust and consensus among themselves.

**JFQ** *What are the premises of PACOM military strategy?*

**PRUEHER** Our first premise is a notion of confluence: political, economic, and military aspects of security are interdependent and cannot be advanced separately. Because of this confluence the command works closely under the interagency process which includes the Departments of Defense and State, National Security Council, and U.S. embassy country teams in the region to ensure that our military activities reinforce other national efforts. The military alone cannot resolve disputes among governments but it can help set the conditions and provide time for other elements to work.

Our second premise is that security (especially military) establishes stable conditions that are a prerequisite for economic growth and prosperity. This stability does not mean maintaining the status quo. Change will continue—mostly for the better—in economics, government, and the ways states relate to each other. What is important is that adjustments take place within the overall context of political processes rather than violence.

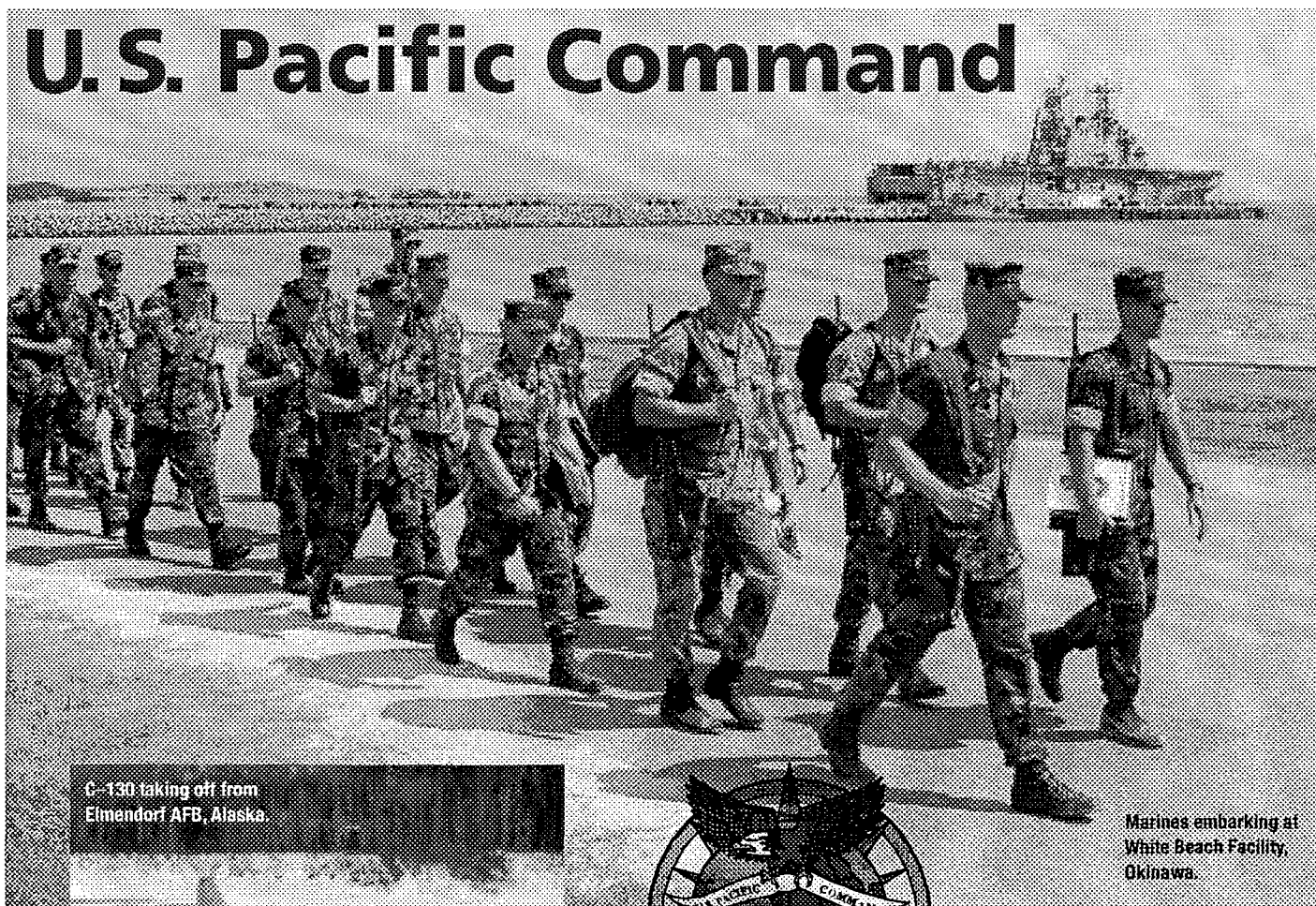
PACOM abilities to anticipate, avert, and react to challenges are enhanced by military-to-military relations with regional countries.

**JFQ** *What is the PACOM military strategy?*

**PRUEHER** Preventive defense. Just as preventive medicine promotes conditions that support good health, preventive defense supports security and stability. Our strategy puts into practice the concepts of national military strategy that shape the international environment, respond to crises, and prepare for an uncertain future. U.S. strategy involves peacetime activities, crisis response, and the capability to fight and win in major regional conflict.

*(continued on page 60)*

# U.S. Pacific Command



C-130 taking off from  
Elmendorf AFB, Alaska.



Marines embarking at  
White Beach Facility,  
Okinawa.

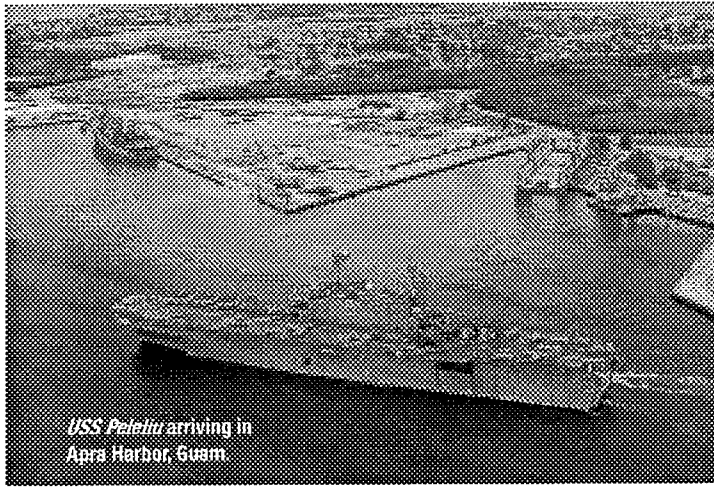
DOD (Angela Engle)

**F**ifty years ago, U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) became America's first unified command. Today the PACOM area of responsibility, stretching from the West Coast of the United States to the East Coast of Africa, has enormous geographic and strategic value. It contains over half of the surface of the globe, 56 percent of the world's population, 43 countries, and the two most populous nations (China and India). In addition, five of our seven mutual defense treaties safeguard the region while the six largest militaries operate in the Asia-Pacific.



Army troops boarding  
C-130 for Cobra  
Gold '95

U.S. Air Force



USS Peleliu arriving in Apra Harbor, Guam



A-10A-10 at Osan Air Base, Korea.

DDO (John K. McDowell)

(continued from page 57)

Peacetime activities include engagement and preparedness which reassure the region of our commitment and deter conflict. Peacetime engagement embraces combined exercises, port calls, meetings, and exchanges of information and people. Successful engagement develops trust and confidence among states and establishes mechanisms for working together. Preparedness works unilaterally and with others to position our forces and ready them to respond to crises across the full spectrum of conflict.

Nothing can prevent all crises. When specific events threaten to bring one about, PACOM is prepared to respond with military forces. The goals of these efforts are to deter larger conflict, reinforce diplomacy, and position critical capabilities for action should deterrence fail.

Underwriting our objective of preventing major international conflict is the ability to fight and win. PACOM trains to do that quickly and decisively with minimum loss of life, preferably with the support of allies and coalition partners but unilaterally if necessary. For the foreseeable future, every aspect of strategy will depend on a network of forward forces and cooperation with other nations for bases and logistical support.

**JFQ** *Can you offer some examples to illustrate the strategy in practice?*

**PRUEHER** Our peacetime activities are akin to an investment, building up tangible assets that can be drawn on in crisis. For example, the United States works closely with Thailand. When factional fighting broke out in Cambodia in July 1997, Americans and other foreign nationals there were at risk. U.S. leaders wanted to position special operations forces nearby in case evacuations proved necessary. Following a telephone conversation with the Thai supreme military commander, PACOM secured permission to deploy these forces to Utapau.

When China fired missiles near Taiwan in March 1996, the United States deployed two carrier battle groups near the Taiwan Strait. This reaction was carefully tailored to contain

the crisis. Simultaneously, we conveyed diplomatic messages to each side, affirming a "one-China" policy and commitment to peaceful resolution of differences across the Taiwan Strait. While Chinese-Taiwan relations remain contentious today, all parties generally recognize that it is in no nation's interest to precipitate another crisis.

**JFQ** *What forces are available to PACOM?*

**PRUEHER** The command has over 300,000 military personnel from all services. Our forward presence alone consists of approximately 100,000. This number is widely perceived throughout the region as a metric of America's commitment and represents capabilities of U.S. Eighth Army and Seventh Air Force in Korea, III Marine Expeditionary Force and Fifth Air Force in Japan, and Seventh Fleet. Adjustments focus on capabilities of the units rather than the numbers themselves.

The other 200,000 assigned personnel are forward based in Alaska or Hawaii or are located along the U.S. west coast. Many spend time in the region executing peacetime engagement tasks. In crisis or war, PACOM can call on the other resources of the U.S. military, including strategic lift, national response forces, and strategic reserves.

**JFQ** *Does the defense guidelines review change our relationship with Japan?*

**PRUEHER** Not fundamentally. Close relations between the United States and Japan remain the cornerstone of East Asian security. The U.S.-Japanese defense guidelines review concluded in September 1997 will enable us to work together more closely in crises that affect Japan's security. They provide for better interoperability and more mutual support. They are not directed against any particular country or intended to give the Japanese military a new role in the region.

**JFQ** *What is the state of our relations with China?*

**PRUEHER** China is modernizing its military. As "paid pessimists," the

PACOM staff is watching carefully. But China will not possess a power projection capability that could threaten U.S. interests for at least a decade and a half. We are pursuing a long-haul, balanced national policy of constructive engagement with China to encourage its emergence as a secure, prosperous, and nonthreatening member of the international community. Increased Chinese transparency on security objectives and military modernization would help reassure the region.

Contacts between the U.S. military and the People's Liberation Army have expanded significantly in the last year. These exchanges are important. As President Jiang Zemin said to me during his recent visit to Hawaii, "Before we can build trust, we need to build understanding." Expanding relations among officers who will lead the next generation is especially important.

The trend of U.S.-Chinese relations is steadily upward, although perturbations can be expected. Common interests in regional peace and security outweigh our differences. Successful management of relations among the United States, Japan, and China is likely to be the principal determinant of regional peace and security in the decades ahead.

**JFQ** *What are your expectations for relations between North and South Korea?*

**PRUEHER** We avoid attempting to predict the future of the Korean peninsula and instead, with U.S. Forces Korea, prepare for a range of possibilities. We can envision three: a lashout by the North, a collapse of the North Korean regime, or a process leading to peaceful reconciliation and eventual reunification.

The peninsula is a volatile flashpoint. North Korea's economic conditions are dire, but it retains a serious military capability. Although the likelihood of war is not high, the consequences would be severe. Our forces in Korea, under the command of General John Tilelli, work in close concert with our ally South Korea to prevent this possibility.

Averting the total collapse of North Korea's economy is in the humanitarian and strategic interest of

everyone. But success depends on the willingness of North Korea to accept assistance, reform its economic policies, and reduce its military posture. Today the North is so focused on maintaining tight control that they are reluctant to accept outside help.

Clearly, we would prefer to see the third scenario resulting in peaceful reconciliation. It is likely to proceed slowly due to the costs and the cultural and economic differences that have arisen over the past fifty years. Pursuing a peaceful and secure reconciliation is an opportunity for states in North-east Asia to work together, especially the United States, China, and Japan.

**JFQ** *What about other nations of the region?*

**PRUEHER** Southeast Asia is increasingly important to U.S. interests. We are pursuing closer partnership with the nations in that area. As part of this engagement, the United States endorses further development of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum. Though limited in scope, this assembly is a promising venue for discussing security issues.

The United States also has a special interest in improving relations with Indonesia, a vast country of over 200 million people, the world's fourth largest population. So far its security forces are coping with a tough situation—arising from the financial crisis—in generally responsible ways, maintaining stability among 5 major cultures and more than 300 subcultures spread across 17,000 islands. Regional stability will be enhanced through the broadest possible U.S.-Indonesian military-to-military relations.

U.S. engagement with other nations in the area is just about where it should be. As indicated earlier, we have adjusted our engagement programs, where necessary, to help lessen the strains of the financial crisis. We also work closely with Singapore, Thailand, and Australia. Looking to the future, India will have increasing regional importance and our

military-to-military relationship is gradually improving.

While it does not enjoy great prosperity, Russia remains an important Pacific power. The forces of the Russian Far East Military District are significantly smaller and less active than during the Cold War but its Pacific Fleet maintains very capable submarines and ships.

**JFQ** *What are the implications of the so-called revolution in military affairs?*

**PRUEHER** There are three. First, the tools of war are changing. Weapons are getting much more accurate. We have sensors which detect battlefield activity that provide far more information, and friendly forces now have better ways of passing it back and forth. If we plan properly, RMA will also provide new tools for conducting "low-end" operations such as peacekeeping, counter-terrorism, and humanitarian assistance.

Second, asymmetric forms of warfare may challenge us. Weapons of mass destruction, information warfare, and terrorism are becoming means by which nations with less traditional military power might try to wage war.

Third, more advanced weaponry, sensors, business practices, and decisionmaking tools offer possibilities for achieving greater efficiency which can sustain security capabilities at reduced costs or with fewer personnel.

The U.S. military is investing in new technology as well as experimenting to develop the doctrine, organization, and experience that can exploit emerging capabilities and respond to new challenges. However, RMA is no panacea. It will not yield substitutes for forward presence of ready forces, high quality personnel, or close international partnerships.

**JFQ** *How can joint operations be made more effective?*

**PRUEHER** Broadening joint concepts beyond the command and control of service components promises to increase the effectiveness of joint warfare. Three concepts that we are now pursuing are greater interagency and coalition cooperation, a concept of tac-

tical air (TACAIR), and more efficient flow of forces between AORs.

While the importance of effective interagency and coalition integration in crisis and war is recognized, this doctrine is infrequently exercised, and joint commanders devote inordinate energy at the outset of an operation to ensure interagency and coalition team building. Practice develops procedures and trust. We must expand training opportunities for interagency coordination.

Joint task force commanders are concerned about the responsiveness and effectiveness of TACAIR support, not the color of a pilot's uniform. Considering TACAIR as a whole is a useful way of leveraging the complementary natures of airpower. For example, Navy carrier air wings, Air Force air expeditionary forces, and long range bombers have differing deployability, operating tempos, and aircraft characteristics, but this mix of complementary capabilities offers opportunities for synergistic employment.

Finally, the demand to share or dual earmark forces among CINCs will increase. Defining new AOR boundaries is less important than operating smoothly across them. The willingness of CINCs to work together informally, assume prudent risk, and avoid inflating requirements pays dividends. For example, PACOM and U.S. Forces Korea are accepting prudent risk by providing forces to stand ready with U.S. Central Command in the Arabian Gulf. These forces include our only forward-based carrier battle group. Opportunities also exist to reduce OPTEMPO and conduct more efficient training by accepting each other's training standards.

**JFQ**

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